

Extract from Sherman Kent's Strategic Intelligence

PROBLEM NO. 7: Should there be a separate administrative unit for collection and dissemination?

Before hazarding an answer to this question it would be well to define the terms.

By collection is meant the exclusive right to procure for the use of professional staff all the raw materials which it needs. It means not merely the collection of the items which I have noted with respect to a library's collecting activities, but all other items. For example, a collecting unit, upon being informed that professional staff is going to do a study on the Iranian Tudeh Party's views on the Arab League, has the duty to collect information on this subject which will answer every conceivable question the mind of the Iranian specialist can pose. Thus collection in this sense involves collecting as any good librarian (of books) fulfills that function, and also collecting as a professional researcher collects after he has exhausted the static resources of his library.

By dissemination is meant the exclusive right to distribute to consumers: (a) raw materials which the surveillance people pick up in the field [] and (b) the finished product as turned out by the professional staff.

In my view, to establish a collection and dissemination unit with those duties is little short of preposterous. With assignment of an exclusive collection function I find myself at greatest variance. For it is one thing for a library to do a good job of acquiring basic stuff of general utility [] and quite another thing to vest in a librarian the exclusive right to acquire all the materials which, say, Mr. Jones, an Iranian specialist, will need to do his study of the Tudeh Party and the Arab League. It is quite another matter to require Mr. Jones to communicate to a collector what he thinks will be needed to do his study. And it is quite another matter to make it administratively difficult, if not impossible, for Mr. Jones himself and in person to call on people in other government agencies and leaf through their files on Iran.

The collecting phase of research cannot be done once and for all at the initial stage of a project; the collection phase pervades all the other phases, and indeed is the phase which is never completed; and the only man to do the collecting of data (beyond obvious materials) which he cannot name by title is the one who knows what he is looking for. Should there exist a man in the library unit who was so great an

Iranian expert that the professional Jones could make his wants known without giving a lecture course on Iranian life and politics, then this man should not be on the library staff. He should be on Mr. Jones's staff.

It will be argued that unless collection is centralized two calamities will result: one, professional staff will unsystematically canvass outside sources of information and as a result of uncoordinated and repetitious requests for the same material will antagonize these sources. Two, professional staff, upon acquiring materials through its own collecting efforts will tend to set up its own small library and hoard materials which other parts of the organization should have.

There are answers to both of these points.

One, anything that professional staff can ask for by specific designation should of course be procured by the regular acquisition methods of the library, provided the library can act with speed. Materials that professional staff cannot specifically designate, it must acquire itself. In these circumstances there is bound to be certain unavoidable duplication of requests. But this is not necessarily the unpardonable sin--especially when it results in a higher level of accomplishment. I have long felt that the man who makes a profession of blustering with indignation every time two people from the same agency make identical calls upon him would be more suitably employed elsewhere.

Two, professional staff will in fact tend to build up its own library. This is as it should be. On the other hand professional staff is the first to realize the advantages of having its private loot registered, and indexed by the library. It may then get it back and in most cases keep it forever. Certainly not all private loot will be registered, and the organization will suffer accordingly, but that portion which is not turned into a central file will be relatively unimportant. Constant effort on the part of management and fast registration and return of such materials will keep the quantity small.

What about the dissemination function? First, what about the dissemination of the so-called raw material out of which the finished product is built up. Should it be disseminated in raw form? I see no reason whatever for the outside distribution of this material in its raw form. Let me be clear about the words "outside" and "raw form".

By outside, I mean outside the parent intelligence organization. Of course it must be circulated inside the organization and circulated with speed and system. The prompt and effective routing of incoming data to the home surveillance and home research people is one of the library's prime jobs. But I do not feel that routing this material in the raw form outside is doing anyone a favor.

By raw form I mean as it comes in--precisely as it comes in. A certain amount of it which the professional staff regards as appropriate for outside distribution should be sent out after it has passed the critical review of the reigning experts. The rest should be described on a daily or weekly bulletin by source or subject or both, and outside persons interested in it should encounter it first in this bulletin. If they wish to see an item of interest let them come around and draw it out of the library.

Admittedly there are disadvantages which such a procedure imposes on outside users, but the disadvantages are small compared to those attendant upon an indiscriminate circulation of everything that comes in, in its original form. In the present state of affairs when the field work is done by far too many inexperienced people and when their virtues are likely to be calculated in terms of the bulk of paper they send in, there seems to be good reason to establish some sort of high-grade professional screen through which the raw material must pass on its way out. In Chapter 10, I touch on this problem again.

Second, what about the dissemination of the intelligence organization's finished product?

That the daily or weekly summaries, the reports, studies, maps, etc., are delivered to people with policy, planning, and operating responsibilities should be and is a matter of gravest concern to every person in the organization. It is a function of ultimate importance. There are two reasons why it should not be placed in the hands of a special collection-and-dissemination unit and why it should be placed in what I have earlier called Control.

Administratively speaking, Control must know where its goods are being sent and how received. It has, hands down, the first claim on the records of distribution and receipt. If the keeping of such records is placed elsewhere, Control must still have its duplicate set. Hence it would seem reasonable to vest the whole job in Control. Secondly, Control is closer to the professional staff than any other unit, and Control and Professional Staff together know more about the substantive side of the job than anyone else. Together they know more about the problems which the work is designed to serve, and hence more about the people who are dealing with the problems. Their continual striving for the applicability of their knowledge automatically put them in close touch with the potential users. Thus there is a sound substantive reason for them to perform the dissemination of the finished product.

In terms of the reasoning in the above paragraphs, I find it impossible to accept the concept of an administrative unit to handle exclusively the collection-and-dissemination functions. Collection of materials which can be designated by name or place or origin can be and should be collected by the library; other materials must be collected by professional staff. The dissemination of both the raw materials and the finished product is a matter in which the professional staff has such an intimate stake that it cannot be excluded. My own answer to the problem is a skillful and active library and a small distribution unit attached to the office of the chief of the organization where it will have close contact with Control and the professional staff.